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Appropriations Committee  
State Capital  
Hartford, CT

March 20, 2011

Dear Appropriations Committee members,

I am writing this letter to request that you consider increasing your funding for our charter schools in the state. From what I understand, charter schools operate on a very small budget and have not had an increase in their funding for a many years but the costs of educating students has increased. The students that attend charter schools are seeking a non-traditional alternative to the traditional public schools that have not been able to meet their educational needs for a variety of reasons. It is extremely important that our youth continue to have the option of choosing a charter school or other alternative school in the event that their local public schools are unable to meet their educational needs and these youth are unable to successfully complete their education programs.

My daughter, Michele, is in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and is attending Explorations Charter High School in Winsted. Michele is diagnosed with a Non Verbal Learning Disorder and has experienced many challenges in her school career. Michele was identified as a special education student when she was in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Michele was extremely shy and did not ask for assistance from her teachers. Michele had poor social skills due to her severe shyness. When Michele was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Michele was also diagnosed with Ocular Motor Dysfunction which also interfered with Michele's learning—especially in regards to reading. She was seen by a Behavioral Optometrist so she can work on increasing her field of vision. With all these challenges she faced, Michele became further behind—academically, socially and emotionally. In 7<sup>th</sup> grade, Michele was attending Torrington Middle School. Michele was receiving special education services. Michele was in classes with children who had severe behavioral problems. Michele was bullied by these children and the teachers were really not helpful. Michele was falling further and further behind. Michele became so withdrawn and in the middle of the school year refused to go to school. My husband and I were very concerned. I enrolled Michele in a small Christian School as I believed this would help her feel safer and hopefully she would be able to concentrate in school. The school did not have support services for students who needed extra help but it was the only school that was close enough and willing to take Michele. At that time, Michele was also diagnosed with a Major Depressive Disorder and Anxiety and was receiving treatment for this also. The staff at the Christian School was very kind but it became clear that Michele did not fit in at all and the school was unable to meet her educational needs.

I did a lot of research trying to find a school for Michele. I wanted a school that would meet her needs educationally and that she would feel accepted in. I liked what I read about Explorations Charter School—non-traditional setting, smaller classes, vocational experience and adventure education. I was hopeful this school would be a good alternative to the huge public high school that is in our district. Based on

Michele's school history, she would not have been able to succeed in a large public high school. Although Michele continues to struggle academically, she really loves the school. She feels accepted there and feels she can be herself. Michele is receiving some special education services at the school. The teachers and staff at the school are very supportive and are working with Michele and are helping her make progress. They are very flexible and understanding of Michele's learning issues. The principal, Gail, is so supportive and positive and very assessable as well as the teachers. I am seeing Michele make progress. I think Michele feels supported by the staff at the school, which is helping Michele feel better and more confident. I am sure there are other children that do not "fit the mold" and have difficulty in traditional public schools for many different reasons. I am hoping our charter schools in the state continue and are able to get the financial support they need to operate. Please provide fair funding for charter schools in the state by passing Senate Bill 1195. We want all our children to have the opportunity to succeed.

Sincerely,

Rachel Rosa